

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:356

ANSWERED ON:18.07.2017

Notification on Western Ghats

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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Government has not brought into force, a law that is likely to make about 56,825 sq. km. of the ecologically rich Western Ghats out of bounds for industrial development and if so, the reasons therefor;
- (b) whether a draft Notification earmarked 60,000 square kilometres of the Western Ghats as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) has been delayed for over a year and if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Kasturirangan Committee has recommended that infrastructure and development projects be subject to environmental clearance, and that villages in ESAs be involved in decision making for future projects and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether some States have approached the Union Government to further reduce the ESA to 9,107 square kilometres instead of 13,108 sq. km. and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the present status of final notification on the recommendations of Gadgil/Kasturirangan reports?

Answer

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(DR. HARSH VARDHAN)

(a) to (e) Based on the recommendations of the High Level Working Group (HLWG) the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had issued a draft Notification on 10.03.2014 declaring an area of 56,825 square kilometres spread over the six states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat in the Western Ghats region as Ecologically Sensitive. Later, addressing the concerns and apprehensions of the various stakeholders the draft Notification was republished on 04.09.2015.

Further, to continue the consultation process the Draft Notification has been republished on 27th February, 2017 for seeking stakeholders comments. The State Governments of the Western Ghats region have been intimated to provide their final recommendation. Recently, the state Government of Kerala has requested to consider only 9107 square kilometres as ESA for the state of Kerala.

To provide immediate protection to the Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) of the Western Ghats the Government issued Directions under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 on 13.11.2013. As per the Directions, the five categories of new and/or expansion projects/activities having maximum interventionist impacts on ecosystems namely (i) Mining, quarrying and sand mining (ii) Thermal Power Plants (iii) Building and construction projects of 20,000 square meters area and above (iv) Township and area development projects with an area of 50 hectares and above and /or with built up area of 1,50,000 square meters and above and (v) Red category of industries are prohibited in the Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) of Western Ghats.
